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Libyan says U.S., Israel plot terror to pin on Tripoli

By Robert H. Reid
Associated Press

TRIPOLI, Libya — The United States and Israel are planning terrorist actions in Europe in the hope that Libya will be blamed for them, a Libyan official charged yesterday.

The two nations hope to use the terrorist actions as pretexts for further military attacks on Libya, said Libyan Information Minister Mohammed Sharafeddin. He said the terrorist attacks would take place "within the next hours," an Arabic phrase meaning "in the near future."

In Washington, White House spokesman Larry Speakes said: "The CIA is not causing terrorist incidents in Europe."

In Tripoli yesterday, there were also reports that Libyan officials had told some of the several hundred foreign journalists in Tripoli to leave the country immediately.

Apparently, however, few journalists actually left, except for some who had already been planning to go. Later in the day, after heavy protests from the foreign journalists, the Libyans appeared to back down.

As of last night, the status of the foreign journalists — especially those from the United States and Western Europe — was still unclear. Under normal conditions, few Western journalists are allowed to enter Libya, but Khadafy's government opened the doors after the U.S. air raids last week.

The journalists were kept under tight rein and taken to bomb-damaged civilian areas and to other arranged "media events" in an attempt to persuade them that the U.S. raid had damaged almost nothing but civilian parts of the city.

They were not allowed to see Libyan leader Moammar Khadafy, although he did hold a news conference yesterday for a group of Soviet-bloc journalists. His remarks to them were not immediately available.

As for the accusation that the United States and Israel planned to stage terrorist attacks, Sharafeddin, the Libyan information minister,

said intelligence sources in "friendly states, including European countries" had told him of the plan. He gave no further clue about his sources.

"This information stresses that Mossad [the Israeli intelligence agency], together with American intelligence, want to conduct operations in Europe, and they want to put the responsibility upon the Jamahiriya [Libya]," Sharafeddin said.

He said the objectives were "to create a lack of confidence in the European public opinion which is sympathetic with the Jamahiriya, especially after the barbaric American aggression ... and to create and find a justification for aggression, especially after the failure of the first aggression."

When asked what sorts of terrorist attacks were planned by Israel and the United States, Sharafeddin replied: "Operations similar to the West Berlin nightclub bombing."

In the bombing April 5, a U.S. Army sergeant and a Turkish woman were killed and 230 people were injured, 63 of them Americans. The United States says the attack on the La Belle disco, frequented by American soldiers, was planned by Libya.

Sharafeddin was asked how many attacks there would be, and he replied: "You may ask Mossad and American intelligence. They know the number."

On another issue, Speakes said in Washington that the White House had no information concerning reports that Khadafy had lost a degree of control over the government and was now sharing power with several military officers.

Unconfirmed reports to that effect have appeared in the Times of London.

"We do not have any information to indicate that there has been any change in the way that Khadafy's running his government," Speakes said. "He may very well have, but we don't have that information."

Another White House official added more directly: "Khadafy is still in charge, as far as we know."